



INL is using IRON's bandwidth to connect Idaho universities with the lab's data center for high-performance computing.

INL cultivates resources for collaboration and business success

By [Misty Benjamin](#), *INL Communications & Governmental Affairs*

Idaho National Laboratory is supporting research and development by crossing the digital divide in order to expand opportunities in Idaho. INL's expansion of high performance computing, data computation and visualization centers allows the lab to act as a hub for collaborations between industry and university partners.

The backbone of the lab's computing collaborations is the Idaho Regional Optical Network ([IRON](#)). Its high-speed connections facilitate researchers at the university to quickly access needed computational resources located in other areas throughout the state.

Brent Stacey, INL's chief information officer, is one of the architects behind IRON. He envisions the investment as a way to enhance opportunities across the state.

"Our ability to provide access to high-performance computing, specialized facilities and high-quality bandwidth is good for the state, students and employers like INL."

INL was instrumental in providing guidance and direction to the state of Idaho through programs such as IRON. This nonprofit organization is chartered to advance science, research, education, health care and state government through access to very high-speed and cost-effective bandwidth. Victor Braud, IRON's general manager, is pleased with how the investment in IRON is bringing geographically-dispersed resources closer together.

"IRON's mission is being fulfilled, and that's exciting," Braud said. "Geographically, we live in a large state and traversing the digital divide is important to the state's economic growth and prosperity."



INL's Chief Information Officer, Brent Stacey, standing next to ICESTORM, one of the two supercomputers housed in INL's data center.

INL's strategic management of technology and information has positioned the lab for the development of capabilities such as: high performance computing capabilities, INL's participation in IRON, and the development and implementation of tools that ensure the right information reaches the right people at the right time.

The change marks a strategic transformation of the outlook on technology and information management. Five years ago, INL identified that strategic management of technology and information at the lab could significantly enhance the mission success of the world-class nuclear laboratory.

INL has shifted the focus from immersion in the day-to-day operations supporting information technology to addressing the long-term information and business process needs of INL. Stacey and his Information Management (IM) team enabled this transition by defining new IM roles, engaging INL strategic planning in support of technology transformation and management of information specifically directed at moving the lab's mission forward.

"It's been said that technology is going to change more in the next 10 years than it has in the past 50 years," Stacey said. "Taking on changes of that magnitude will require an infrastructure that is robust, and a team that is in tune with the dynamics of the business."

Gartner, renowned as the world's leader in information technology research and advisory services, has published a case study detailing how INL manages information to achieve its mission. This case study recognizes INL's adoption of practices with a forward-looking perspective toward business needs for information management and technology adoption. This is only the third time in the past decade that Gartner has performed a case study involving a national laboratory.

Realizing that IM must be an integrated business partner, Stacey was instrumental in changing every facet of the way that information management and technology decisions happen at INL. Stacey supports the laboratory's information and technology needs and also strategically engages all areas of the laboratory to ensure that every activity within his organization is directly aligned with the overall mission of the laboratory. The effort ensures that IM engages senior management as a strategic partner in solving INL's most challenging issues as well as providing ongoing excellence

in operational support.

Stacey believes the chief information officer with any business must be an effective innovator and must be an integral part of a corporate strategy's birth, planning, implementation and continued refinement. The High Performance Workplace initiative at INL is an example of this strategy in action. The initiative, supported by INL senior management, will transform INL's workplace through the alignment of technology and information management with business requirements and future needs.

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